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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT MONDAY, October 28, 1940

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SUBJECT: "COOKING WITH LARD." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A.

Did you ever notice how your appetite changes with the weather? Ever notice around this time of year how you get an appetite for foods you didn't care so much about in summer? You begin asking for an extra doughnut with your coffee, and more French fried potatoes, and another piece of pie. This seems to be nature's way of helping you keep warm in cold weather. Nature gives you an appetite for the heat-producing foods, especially for fat, the best heat-producer of them all.

This fall one of the best cooking fats is on the bargain counter. You can buy lard for around 7 to 10 cents a pound, depending on the quality. Mountainous supplies keep the price down and keep lard on the official list of surplus foods. To be sure, the United States is not producing as much lard this year as last. But neither are we exporting the great quantities of lard we did before the war abroad. During the coming 12 months we will have over 2 billion pounds of lard to use--several million pounds more than usual. And that will be enough to supply every citizen to his heart's content with biscuits, fried potatoes, doughnuts, cookies, pie and all the other good things made with lard.

So now here is an excellent and most economical fat for your winter meals. But to make the most of this food bargain, of course, you have to know the hows and whys of using it.

Our grandmothers understood the uses of lard better than many housewives today because lard used to be the universal cooking fat. Today you have your choice of many different fats for cooking. To help housewives understand and make best use of lard, food scientists at a number of State experiment stations have

investigated lard in cooking. And they recommend its use for deep-fat frying, and for pan-frying, and for shortening, especially for shortening. The scientists agree that lard is tops for biscuits, pastry and cookies. Scientists at the Iowa and Nebraska Stations have found that it is also good for cake with a slight change in the usual method of mixing or the proportions of ingredients somewhat. One method is to cream the lard with only half the sugar. Then add the rest of the sugar mixed with egg last.

But before they go into the details of cooking with lard, these food scientists have a word to say about digestibility. They say: "Don't let anybody tell you lard is less digestible than other cooking fats. Actually it is 97 percent digestible, and none of the other cooking fats has a higher rating than that." The Wisconsin Station points out that all fats which melt at body temperature or below are completely digested and absorbed. They say butter, cream, lard and olive oil are 97 or 98 percent digested.

You may be interested to know that softness or hardness of lard makes a difference in cooking. Soft lards are oily and hard to distribute and combine in batter. So soft lard is not as good for making a cake as a solid lard that creams well. On the other hand, for frying a soft lard will serve your purposes just as well. For deep-fat frying you want a lard that gets quite hot before it begins to smoke. For pan-frying you don't have to worry about the smoking point. For biscuits, pastry and cookies as for cake you want lard with a bland or neutral flavor, firm enough to cream well.

The Iowa scientists point out that you also have to treat lard properly before, during and after use. Keep lard covered and in a cold place if you want to keep it from absorbing odors and turning rancid. Lard can take on odors of strong-flavored foods, or absorb the taste of foods fried in it.

You'll get better fried food and be able to use the lard longer if you are careful about temperature in deep-fat frying. In making doughnuts, or French fried potatoes, or croquettes, say, use a deep, straight-sided kettle, and a fat thermometer to tell you exactly when the lard is the right temperature for frying. One mistaken idea food scientists have put in the discard is that fat is the right temperature to fry when it begins to smoke. They say lard at the smoking point is breaking down and becoming indigestible. And lard that has been overheated won't keep to use for frying again. So to protect your lard as well as your fried food, depend on a thermometer.

Here are a couple of other useful points to remember about deep-fat frying. Have your kettle only two-thirds full of lard. And be careful to wipe all foods dry when they go in the hot lard to avoid spattering. After frying pour the hot lard through cheesecloth to remove food particles. Then clarify it by heating it gradually with slices of raw potato in it. When the potato slices are brown, strain the lard again, and put it away in a cold place.

And remember that for baking powder biscuits, pastry and cookies lard is an excellent and cheap shortening. Lard is also good for deep-fat frying and pan-frying.

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